

Bellingham

Borderlands Place Programme Board

Meeting Report

23rd March 2022

18:00

Virtual (MS Teams)

Attendees

Board Members	Organisation
Anne Lawson (Chair)	NCC
Cllr John Riddle	NCC
Cllr Martin Dickson-Green	Bellingham Parish Council
Cllr Anthony Kirkbride	Bellingham Parish Council
Ben Dickson-Green	North Tyne and Redesdale Community Partnership
Lindsay Davidson	Bellingham Schools Partnership
Brian Tilley	Bellingham Town Hall
Steve Gibbon	Bellingham Heritage Centre
Peter Lloyd	Churches Together
Vince Walsh	Karbon Homes
Officers	Role
Chris Walker	Community Regeneration Officer
Iain Hedley	Community Regeneration Officer

Apologies

Board Member	
Officers	Role

OBJ:OBJ

Contents

Governance.....	2
Vision for the town.....	3
Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives	7
Public Consultation & Citizen Space Survey.....	8

Governance

The relevant documents have been returned by all board members and have been placed on the publicly available Borderland Place Programme webpage for the town.

Declaration of Interests have been completed by each board member and are held at NCC. A summary of DOIs was agreed by the board and will be uploaded to Bellingham's Borderlands Place Programme webpage.

The board may refer to NCC Policies, links to these are available on the Place Programme webpage for the town.

- Whistle blowing
- GDPR
- Complaints

Vision for the town

The board was asked in the first board meeting to consider the elements that might be incorporated into a Borderlands Place Plan Vision for the town. They were reminded of the Borderlands overall programme core principles when they did this:

The five core principles that underpin the Place Programme:

- **Place-based:** Assessing investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in the future, what it needs, and what it offers.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.
- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns and town centres.
- **Prevention and future proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres.

The group used time in the previous meeting to brainstorm ideas. These are summarised below:

Group One	Group Two
Reliance on visitor economy - increase and get economic impact	Lack of local jobs for young people - Hexham and Newcastle
More business parks?	High quality jobs will attract younger, skilled employees
Insufficient disabled parking (2 places)	Events - need to be driven by leaders
Local artists / crafts network	Need some small, rural business units - none available to rent in Bellingham
Parking needs review	



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Keep business in the area without the need to move out

Making sure that there is affordable housing for those who need it and the services to support that

Cycle hub - increase visitor spend

Upskill the community - put on courses locally so that people don't have to travel

New scheme 60 plus houses - purchase / rental / shared ownership / rent to buy / supported housing - need services to support that

Thriving environment for businesses and business retention

Old Border counties railway track to Falstone Dam - cycle track opportunity?

Things to do in Bellingham - gym - increase recreational facilities

Mentoring system for people to help them access opportunities

Retain retail offer

Market opportunities

Relocate the grit pile?

Car Parking - a need for additional parking

Lots of innovation - people want the opportunity to grow their business

Rural exemplars - crafts etc

Industrial heritage is included in the heritage centre - could signpost but the centre can lead tours from the heritage

Public transport - difficult to get from one place to another

Microbrewery at ambulance station

Ground things in reality for sustainability - how do we make it sustainable?

Industrial heritage could be developed further but needs a driver

Business is generally good - reasonable route out of COVID

Tourism/gift shops - no need for additional capacity

Limited public transport - not integrated

Quite a mixed business base - not much capacity left

Plenty of hikers/walkers in the town

EC points - another 6 going in

Plan for shops that may be vacated – COOP

Participation/group sports

Needs to be an innovative way of meeting transport needs

Facilities and support for businesses

Unemployment is very low although many need to travel

Sports facility - nearest is Otterburn

From the ideas, a draft vision was completed by the NCC officer team and presented to the board.

Proposed (draft) Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Vision

By 2031 Bellingham will be a thriving environment for business startup, growth and retention across all sectors with access to local mentoring and skills development and will have grown its visitor economy, increasing high quality jobs in the sector and the economic impact of visitors on the village.

Capitalising on its strong retail offer and rich industrial heritage, the village centre environment will be improved, and parking arrangements made fit for purpose. Cycling and public transport connectivity will be reviewed and enhanced developed.

~~The board will work with housing providers to ensure that supply and services meet the needs of the community.~~ Recreational, fitness and wellbeing facilities for both residents and visitors will be enhanced with good access to social care.

The board discussed the draft vision and agreed upon a number of changes, all of which can be viewed on the edited vision (above). The amendments were made during the meeting and agreed, specifically:

- An early emphasis on the strength of local business growth and retention, now included in the first sector
- 'Rich industrial heritage' now changed to 'rich heritage' to reflect the historical value of everything that has shaped Bellingham
- A discussion around the classification of Bellingham as a town or village – although the general consensus considered Bellingham as a village, it was agreed that 'town' would be used to reflect the aims and objectives of the 'town' plan
- Cycling and public transport now 'developed' rather than 'enhanced'
- Removal of the sentence focusing on housing providers as it was considered external to the scope of the Borderlands Place Programme
- Although social care services will be vital to the local community, this was thought to be inherent in the 'fitness and wellbeing' section of the original draft vision.

The edited draft was then produced in a revised form, agreed by board for the consultation (below):



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Revised (draft) Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Vision

By 2031 Bellingham will be a thriving environment for business startup, growth and retention across all sectors with access to local mentoring and skills development. Bellingham will have grown its visitor economy, increasing high quality jobs in the sector and the economic impact of visitors on the village.

Capitalising on its strong retail offer and rich heritage, the town environment will be improved, and parking arrangements made fit for purpose. Cycling and public transport connectivity will be reviewed and developed while recreational, fitness and wellbeing facilities for both residents and visitors will be enhanced.

Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

During the previous meeting, the board was asked to consider the overall Borderlands Place Programme.

Reviewing the seven overall Borderlands Programme Strategic Objectives, the board selected four that it felt most reflected the needs of the town. Bellingham's priority objectives chosen in the first board meeting are highlighted in red:

~~SO1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.~~

SO2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.

SO3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres.

SO4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.

~~SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.~~

~~SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.~~

SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.

The officer team then drafted bespoke versions for the town, and these were discussed by the board. The following draft strategic objectives for the Borderlands Place Programme in the town were identified, for further consideration following community consultation.

Proposed (draft) Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

1. **Safeguard Enhance** existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
2. Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham.

3. **Safeguard Support** existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.
4. Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.

The re-drafted strategic objectives are presented below and demonstrate the final draft strategic objectives before consultation. The word 'safeguard' has now been revised:

Revised (draft) Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme Strategic Objectives

1. Enhance existing businesses and attract new businesses into Bellingham.
2. Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in Bellingham.
3. Support existing employment and deliver quality new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for Bellingham residents.
4. Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in Bellingham.

Public Consultation & Citizen Space Survey

The board discussed the methods used to let the community know about the Bellingham Borderlands Place Programme. The drafted Vision and Strategic Objectives would be presented, and the community would be asked for their views on them. Similar consultations had been completed by the delivery team at NCC for both Blyth and Ashington using online survey software Citizen Space as well as through hard copies of questionnaires in strategic locations. The aims are to:

- Ask respondents about how they feel about living / working / running a business / studying in Bellingham:
 - What are the best things?
 - What are the worst things?
 - What would you like to change?

- Gather demographic data from the respondents to ensure a representative view

Activity / week com	11/4	18/4	25/4	2/5	9/5	16/5	23/5	30/5	6/6
Draft survey									
Board review draft & focus group prep									
Survey Live									
Focus groups									
Officer Analysis									
Board meeting									8/6/22 18:00

It was agreed that the survey, when drafted, would be shared with all board members for review with a view to going live on the 9th May 2022.

Next meeting (proposed) – in person, Wednesday 8th June 2022 at 18:00

Apologies sent in advance by Steve Gibbon and Brian Tilley who will be unable to attend.